



Admiral's Corner

From Commander, Naval Safety Center

Reducing Mishaps Is a Team Effort



I often get the chance to speak with maintainers, aviators, Sailors, and Marines around the fleet. Their enthusiasm to get the job done is evident, but I have to ask myself, "At what cost?"

Some of those costs are described in a special section of this issue, which provides the status of our efforts to reduce mishaps in all areas. We also explain what the Naval Safety Center is doing to help. This pullout gives an overview of FY04 statistics for aviation, afloat, and ashore. Our directorates address specific issues to make you more informed about the products and services that we offer, and how they can help you to reduce mishaps. These best-business or safety practices also can help to improve the culture and effectiveness of your commands.

For those areas where we missed the goal, you can be sure that a main cause was human error: A few maintainers didn't make sound risk decisions, simply lost focus, or were so busy they allowed mishaps to occur. We know human error is involved in 80 percent of our mishaps. We have people looking at ways to improve that problem, and this issue offers a few examples on how to avoid those related to maintenance. We can't ignore it and must find answers to nagging questions like: Why did a Sailor die on a spotting dolly moving around a hangar deck? Why do hundreds of Sailors and Marines die in their cars or trucks every year? Why do people who write stories, tell us they knew a procedure wasn't right, but they did it anyway? We need to get at the root of these problems, especially those involving off-duty PMV and recreational mishaps.

One goal that we missed was traffic deaths. I recently spoke to a group of safety professionals about my passion to reduce PMV mishaps and the dramatic increase in motorcycle fatalities. I told them that we have to get our arms around this problem. We have to get better. I am concerned about the deaths and injuries from traffic accidents and asked the editor to broaden a

study he did on aviation ratings.

The Work Zone article on pages four and five gives some insight into who is at risk. It identifies those rates at higher risk on our roads. For example, a non-designated seaman has a three-times-greater chance of dying in a PMV accident than a non-designated airman. It's an interesting study, but it will be effective only if you look for your rating, review possible solutions, discuss it in your shops, and take action. We need efforts like this for us to meet the goals during the next year.

I always want to share and celebrate the good deeds our Sailors, Marines and civilians do each day. It's often hard to determine mishaps that we prevented, but the Bravo Zulu section shines the spotlight on people who saved the day and are helping us to meet the mishap goal. They have made mishap reduction a reality, and their efforts are checks in the good column.

At the last Joint Services Safety Conference, Director, Readiness Programming and Assessments, Mr. Joseph Angello, Jr. said, "Mishap reduction is not my job; it's our job. You must become the advocates, explain why our efforts are important and how we're going to get the job done. We must tell leadership why it's important. We can't sit on our hands and do just what we did last year." He added, "[Accepting losses] is not a position any of us wants to defend when we have to tell a parent, spouse or family member about a lost loved one."

Think about those words as we start the second half of the mishap-reduction campaign. We can make the goal, but everyone must work together, look at new ideas, and change our attitudes.

RADM Dick Brooks